REMARKS

Claims 2, 4-16, 18-19, and 21-44 were pending, of which claims 2, 18, 36, 38, 40, 42, and 43 are independent. Claims 1, 18, 36, 38, 40, and 42 are amended. Claim 45 is added. Reconsideration of the action mailed December 4, 2006, is requested in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

The Examiner rejected claims 2, 4-16, 18-19, 24-26, 28-32, and 35-42 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0167310 ("Moody"). The Examiner rejected claims 33-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Moody. The Examiner rejected claims 21-23 and 27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Moody in view of Venolia et al., "Understanding Sequence and Reply Relationships within Email Conversations: A Mixed-Model Visualization" ("Venolia"). The Examiner rejected claims 43-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Moody in view of Sudarsky et al., "Visualizing Electronic Mail" ("Sudarsky"). Applicant traverses the rejections.

**Interview Summary**

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the courtesy of an interview conducted January 30, 2007. Applicant's representative Brian J. Gustafson and Examiner Bullock participated. During the interview, claim 2 was discussed with respect to the cited reference of Moody. In particular, Applicant described how the <u>mailbox</u> of Moody continually displays all of the e-mail messages in a thread, while a separate region in Moody displays thread information. In contrast, Applicant's claims are directed to displaying thread information without displaying entries for individual e-mail messages belonging to the thread in the mailbox. The Examiner agreed that clarifying this feature of the claim would likely overcome the Moody reference.

**Section 102 Rejections**

Claim 2 stands rejected over Moody. Applicant traverses the rejection.

Claim 2, as amended, is directed to a system for threading e-mail messages that includes creating an e-mail thread if a first e-mail message is determined to be related to a second e-mail message. The e-mail thread includes a thread header that has e-mail thread information derived

from attributes of at least one of the e-mail messages in the e-mail thread. Information about received e-mail messages is displayed in a user interface. The thread header information is displayed in the user interface where the displayed thread header information is distinct from information displayed for individual e-mail messages and where the thread header information is displayed in the mailbox place of mailbox entries for the first e-mail message and the second e-mail message associated with the e-mail thread. Thus, claim 2 recites that when the thread header information is displayed in the mailbox, the entries for the first and second e-mail messages are not displayed in the mailbox.

Moody discloses a number of techniques for categorizing e-mail messages. *See* Abstract. In Moody, a technique is disclosed where e-mail threads are provided. A conversation thread can be displayed graphically as a hierarchy of related e-mail messages adjacent to an e-mail inbox. *See* paragraph 74; FIG. 6A. For example, the graphical hierarchy is displayed adjacent to the inbox when a particular message is selected such that the graphical hierarchy shows a conversation tree associated with the selected message. *See* paragraph 79; FIG. 8A. Alternatively, Moody discloses an e-mail inbox where the selection of an individual e-mail results in the display highlighting other e-mail messages presented in the inbox that are within the conversation thread (*e.g.*, with a particular color). *See* paragraph 102; FIG. 9.

However, Moody does not disclose or suggest displaying thread header information in a mailbox place of entries for e-mail messages associated with the e-mail thread. The Examiner states that Moody discloses the displaying of thread header information at page 7, paragraph 79. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Paragraph 79 of Moody discloses a user interface as shown in FIG. 8. Paragraph 79 reads, in pertinent part, as follows:

> The user interface combines a traditional list of electronic mail messages 802 with a conversation tree 804. The node associated with the selected message 806 may be replaced with a reduced-resolution overview 808. Alternatively, the overview may be replaced with a window containing a summary of the electronic mail messages 802 and/or all or part of the conversation-thread tree 804, using the techniques described herein.

The cited paragraph describes the display of a tree representation of the threaded e-mail messages. As shown in FIG. 8, the conversation tree can be displayed adjacent to a listing of

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e-mail messages, such as a mailbox. Therefore, the conversation tree provides a graphical representation of related messages in the thread <u>in addition to</u> the display of the individual e-mail messages in the mailbox. In one disclosed alternative, a portion of the graphical representation of the conversation tree can be replaced by a summary of the content of the selected node message or a summary of all (or some) of the messages in the conversation tree. Thus, even when a summary is displayed, <u>the mailbox entries for e-mail message remain displayed</u>.

The referenced portion of paragraph 79 discloses replacing some or all <u>of an overview</u> with a summary window. *See* paragraph 79 "the overview may be replaced with a window containing a summary." However, this is not related to the display of individual e-mail messages of the thread. Instead, paragraph 79 describes an alternative for what is displayed in the conversation tree of the e-mail application when a node within the tree is selected. The overview portion refers to a low-resolution overview of a message that is typically displayed in the conversation tree when a node of the tree is selected. *See* paragraphs 75 and 79. When paragraph 79 discloses replacing a portion of the overview including part of the conversation thread tree, Moody is not referring to replacing any display of the list of e-mail messages. Instead, Moody is referring to replacing the low-resolution overview with the summary information. Neither of these displays in the conversation tree change the display of the individual email messages in the e-mail mailbox. Consequently, paragraph 79 does not disclose or suggest displaying thread header information in a mailbox in place of entries for the first e-mail message and the second e-mail message associated with the e-mail thread.

Applicant respectfully submits that claim 2 as well as claims 8-12 and 35, which depend from claim 2, are in condition for allowance.

Claim 18 stands rejected over Moody. Applicant traverses the rejection.

Claim 18 is directed to a method for threading e-mail messages that includes displaying thread header information in a user interface where the thread header information is displayed as in a mailbox in lieu of information for individual e-mail messages associated with the e-mail thread.

The Examiner again relies on paragraph 79 and FIG. 8A as disclosing the recited displaying. However, as discussed above, paragraph 79 and FIG. 8A both display information

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associated with individual e-mail messages of the thread in addition to the graphical representation of the thread. Moody does not disclose or suggest displaying thread header information as in a mailbox in lieu of information for individual e-mail messages associated with the e-mail thread. For at least the same reasons as set forth above with respect to claim 2, claim 18 as well as claims 4-7 and 19-34, which depend from claim 18, are in condition for allowance.

Claim 26 stands rejected over Moody. Applicant traverses the rejection.

Claim 26 is directed to a method for threading e-mail messages including displaying an expansion icon associated with the thread header and responsive to a selection of the expansion icon displaying information about each e-mail message associated with the e-mail thread in the user interface. Moody does not disclose or suggest an expansion icon, which, when selected, displays information about each individual e-mail message associated with the e-mail thread.

The Examiner states that Moody discloses the recited feature at paragraphs 109-111. Applicant respectfully disagrees. The cited paragraphs disclose the use of folders to categorized e-mail messages from a user's inbox according to a predefined set of categories. *See* paragraph 109. An algorithm is used to identify the category or categories associated with an e-mail message using the e-mail message header information (*e.g.*, a message priority setting). *See* paragraph 110. Thus, e-mail messages are assigned categories relative to predefined criteria, not based on a relationship to other individual e-mail messages. The category selection, whether using an icon or not, is an organizational tool that is unrelated to e-mail threads. Thus, the categories are not e-mail message threads of related e-mail messages; but instead are just folders having e-mail messages that comply with particular sorting criteria.

Icons can be selected to view the contents of a particular category. *See* paragraph 111. However, this simply displays all e-mail messages assigned to the category (*i.e.*, the contents of the folder). It does not display e-mail messages as part of a particular e-mail thread where the thread includes related e-mail messages. Therefore, the cited portions of Moody do not disclose or suggest an expansion icon which, when selected, displays information about individual e-mail messages associated with an e-mail thread.

In responding to Applicant's previous arguments, the Examiner states that "Moody teaches selecting a category icon and wherein when a message is selected that is part of a thread,

the other items in the thread are highlighted in the display in which three other electronic mail entries are highlighted" (*see* Action page 13). The Examiner is juxtaposing two different features of Moody. As set forth above, the category icon disclosed by Moody only provides a means to organize all messages by particular categories. It does not disclose or suggest an *expansion icon* for controlling the display of e-mail messages associated with a particular thread. Similarly, the discussion of highlighting in the display in paragraph 102 discloses that the selection of an individual e-mail results in the highlighting of other e-mail messages presented in the inbox that are within the conversation thread (*e.g.,* with a particular color). *See* paragraph 102; FIG. 9. Moody only discloses highlighting messages in a thread when a particular e-mail message is selected, not an expansion icon. Thus, the cited section also fails to disclose or suggest the selection of an expansion icon which displays information about e-mail messages associated with a thread.

Applicant respectfully submits that claim 26, as well as claims 27-28, which depend from claim 26, are in condition for allowance.

Claim 36 stands rejected over Moody. Applicant traverses the rejection.

Claim 36 is directed to a computer program product for threading e-mail messages that includes displaying the thread header information in a user interface where the thread header information is displayed in a mailbox in place of the information for each e-mail message associated with the e-mail thread. For at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 2, claim 36 as well as claim 13-16 and 37, which depend from claim 36, are in condition for allowance.

Claim 38 stands rejected over Moody. Applicant traverses the rejection.

Claim 38 is directed to a system for threading e-mail messages that includes a display means operable to display information about received e-mail messages in a user interface where the thread header information is displayed and where the thread header information is displayed as an entry in a mailbox in place of mailbox entries for each e-mail message associated with the e-mail thread. For at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 2, claim 38 as well as claim 39, which depends from claim 38, are in condition for allowance.

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Claim 40 stands rejected over Moody. Applicant traverses the rejection.

Claim 40 is directed to a method for threading e-mail messages that includes creating an e-mail thread having a thread header and displaying the thread header as an entry in a mailbox. Moody does not disclose or suggest displaying a thread header as an entry in mailbox.

The examiner mischaracterizes the claim language, stating that Moody discloses "displaying the e-mail thread" citing paragraph 79. Specifically, the examiner points to the portion of paragraph 79 discussed above that refers to replacing the conversation tree with summary information about an e-mail message or a summary of all or part of the conversation tree. However, displaying a summary of all or part of the thread is not the same as displaying a thread header. The claimed thread header includes e-mail thread information derived from attributes from at least one of a first or second e-mail message of the e-mail thread. The thread header is not the same a summary of the thread. Moody does not disclose or suggest presenting a thread header as an entry in a mailbox. Applicant respectfully submits that claim 40, as well as claim 41, which depends from claim 40 is in condition for allowance.

Claim 42 stands rejected over Moody. Applicant traverses the rejection.

Claim 42 is directed to a method for threading e-mail messages that includes displaying a display item indicating a nature of the relationship between the first e-mail message and the second e-mail message and where the display item is displayed in a mailbox in place of mailbox entries for the first e-mail message and the second e-mail message. As discussed above, Moody does not disclose or suggest displaying information in place of individual e-mail messages. For at least the same reasons as set forth above with respect to claim 2, claim 42 is in condition for allowance.

## Section 103 Rejections

Claim 43 stands rejected over Sudarsky. Claim 43 is directed to a method for threading e-mail messages that includes determining that a first e-mail message is related to a second e-mail message. Determining if the messages are related includes identifying whether a subject field of the first e-mail message and the subject field of the second e-mail message include

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common data. If the subject field includes common data, determining whether the second e-mail message includes a message identifier included in the first e-mail message.

The Examiner states that Sudarsky discloses determining that a first e-mail message is related to a second e-mail message at page 5, section 3.2.3 "The Thread Function". Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Sudarsky discloses grouping messages by conversation thread. Sudarsky defines only a single criterion for threading messages. Specifically, Sudarsky states that "[W]e define the thread of an e-mail conversation as a series of messages sharing the same subject line, where prefixes such as "Re:" and "Fw:" are ignored." *See* Sudarsky page 5, section 3.2.3. Thus, if the subject line is the same, the messages are grouped in a thread.

However, claim 43 recites two distinct criteria for determining that a first e-mail message is related to a second e-mail message. First, common data in the subject field of the e-mail messages are identified. If there is common data in the subject field, the second e-mail message is checked for a message identifier included in the first e-mail message. Sudarsky only discloses the first criterion. Sudarsky checks the subject field of messages and groups them according to common subjects. Sudarsky does not further check for message identifier information to determine whether messages are related. Sudarsky does not disclose or suggest determining whether a first e-mail message is related to a second e-mail message as recited in claim 43.

Applicant respectfully submits that claim 43, as well as claim 44, which depends from claim 43, is in condition for allowance.

## New Claim

Claim 45 is added. Claim 45 is directed to a method that includes displaying a thread header as an entry in a mailbox in place of entries in the mailbox for the first e-mail message and the second e-mail message. For at least the same reasons as set forth above with respect to claim 2, claim 45 is allowable.

## Conclusion

Applicant respectfully requests that all pending claims be allowed.

By responding in the foregoing remarks only to particular positions taken by the Examiner, Applicant does not acquiesce with other positions that have not been explicitly addressed. In addition, Applicant's arguments for the patentability of a claim should not be understood as implying that no other reasons for the patentability of that claim exist.

Please apply $200 in excess claim fees to deposit account 06-1050. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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